

The

October 2001

Ballarat Naturalist



Large Duck Orchid
(Cronin)

Orchids of the Ballarat District

Speakers: Pat and Bill Murphy

Pat and Bill form a most effective team. Over the years Bill has undertaken most of the photography, whilst Pat has researched and written the script for the many meetings at which they've been asked to speak. They have become experts on our local orchids.

Ballarat's orchids are all terrestrial, perennial and capable of withstanding varied and extreme conditions such as drought, bushfires and impoverished soils. Practically all of them need mycorrhizal fungi to provide nutrients (in exchange for carbohydrates). The leafless saprophytic orchids such as the Hyacinth, Potato and Elbow Orchids rely totally on the fungi and dead organic matter for their nourishment.

Orchids display a variety of root structures—tuberoides, pseudobulbs, thickened stems, corms or a mesh of fine roots. Most are bisexual and most are pollinated by insects, although self-pollination can occur. The flowers have 3 outer sepals and 3 inner petals; one of the petals is known as the labellum which plays an important part in the process of pollination.

Bill's slides were used to illustrate the rich variety of orchids. His superb shots showed the varied colours, shapes and special distinguishing features, while Pat, fully conversant with the latest name changes and species subdivisions, gave their names and described their flowering seasons and habitat preferences. With the variety of orchids—over 100 species—to be found in our district, at least one species can be seen flowering in the district at any given time of the year.

One of the best areas is the peppermint/stringybark forest between Linton and Mt. Doran. The Beacon Hill section of Enfield Forest has Tiny Caladenia *Caladenia pu-*

silla and Large Tongue Orchid *Cryptostylis subulata*, the latter preferring the damper areas and exhibiting large fleshy green leaves. Another orchid preferring damp areas is the Common Bird Orchid *Chiloglottis valida* found at Mt. Erip; it is so named because the flowers resemble the gape of a young bird demanding food from its parent.



Common Bird Orchid
(Cronin)

Orchids can hybridise—for example the Bronze Bird Orchid *Chiloglottis x pescottiana* is a rare natural hybrid between the Common Bird Orchid and the Dainty Bird Orchid *Chiloglottis trapeziformis*. The Mentone Greenhood *P. x toveyana* is a cross between *P. concinna* the Trim Greenhood and *P. alata* the Striped Greenhood.

More variety of form is seen in the Slaty Helmet Orchid *Corybas incurvas* which sits on a ground-hugging leaf no more than 3cm high, while the Small Gnat Orchid *Cyrtostylis reniformis* on its slender stem prefers drier areas and forms sizeable colonies.

Some orchids have a densely bearded labellum such as the Copper Beard Orchid *Calochilus campestris*, a rarity here; others include the Red Beard Orchid *C. paludosus* and the Purplish Bird Orchid *C. robertsonii*, the latter probably the most common of this type.

Many of these orchids are winter and spring-flowering. However in summer you might find Hyacinth Orchids such as the Spotted Hyacinth Orchid *Dipodium pardilinum* and the Rosy Pink Hyacinth Orchid *D. roseum*.



Purplish Beard Orchid
(Cronin)

Two of the most common Greenhood orchids of forest and woodland is the Tall Greenhood, now named *Pterostylis melagramma* and Nodding Greenhood *P. nutans*. A rare white form of this has been seen locally.

The Waxlip Orchid *Glossodia major* is also frequently found, as is the Wallflower Orchid *Diuris orientis*. A most spectacular orchid is Austral Ladies Tresses *Spiranthes sinensis* which has been seen in the Creswick Forest in February.



Nodding Greenhood
(Cronin)

Moving to the Box-Ironbark forests north of Ballarat which are drier and warmer, Large Duck Orchids *Caleana major* bloom and the highly endangered (in Victoria) Lowly Greenhood *P. despectans*. Pat and Bill found the Swan Greenhood *P. cycnocephala* next to a big glacial erratic at Campbelltown, and saw Hooded Caladenias *C. cucullata* in the Fell's Gully Forest. Hybrids in this environment include the Crimson Sun Orchid *Thelymitra x macmillanii* (a cross between the Rabbit Ears *T. antennifera* and the Scented Sun Orchid *T. nuda*) and the Globe-hood Sun Orchid *T. x chasmogama*.

In the wetter, shady areas of the Wombat Forest grows a Potato Orchid "Cinnamon Bells" *Gastrodia procera*, a saprophytic plant. A late summer flowering orchid is the Summer Greenhood *P. decurva*.

Sometimes orchids can seem practically identical and can only be separated by identifying the insects which pollinate them!

On the basalt plains most ground cover is pasture grassland but remnants of the native vegetation can be found in railway reserves, stream frontages, and in cemeteries so there is potential for orchids to be found here too. A newly named one is Foster's Leek Orchid *Prasophyllum fosteri* blooming in October.

Even urban blocks may contain orchids where the land has been undisturbed: the final slide showed Slender Sun Orchids *T. pauciflora* on a block in Tress Street, Ballarat some years ago.

The anecdotes accompanying the slides revealed the regularity with which Pat and Bill check their favourite localities; not all their finds can be documented here but we were shown some rarities and felt some of the thrill that comes with finding a unique specimen.



Keen orchidists may like to know that Pat's main references are: *Flora of Victoria Vol 2*, the *Orchids of Victoria* by Backhouse and Jeanes, and the latest edition of the *Census of Vascular Plants of Victoria* by J.H. Ross; all have been compiled by Melbourne Herbarium botanists.

Editor.

Excursion - Native Gardens

Fourteen members arrived at the home of Lance and Judith Lewis at Mt. Helen. There were a few sprinkles of rain but we could put up with these as we delighted in the advent of spring. Judith welcomed us all and freely expounded upon the history of her garden and its precinct in Mt. Helen. It was the only area which still had a bit of bushland around it when the couple came to Ballarat. The garden was not even planned—just bits added. The lot is well-drained and slopes to front, back and sides from a central high point on which grows a stand of eucalypts—original cover. There were odd peppermints and stringybarks, but scent-barks occurred mostly. The only rough guide Lance and Judith followed in planting the garden was that if they went away everything would still be alive hopefully when they returned! The soil is poor but the high aspect, Judith thinks, keeps the lot relatively frost free on cold mornings. Gypsum was added to the soil at first, then a pine needle mulch.

Now there is a fine collection of correas, cryptandra, grevilleas, including the local *G. bedgoodiana* from Enfield, bush peas, epacris, *Hardenbergia gastrolobium*



(poisonous to stock), Cranberry Heath, Poa Grass, *Leptospermum megacarpa* and one Hyacinth Orchid has appeared. An original Grass Tree did not recover following the installation of a sand filter. Lance says there are other specimens, however, in the bush to the west.

Judith told us Koalas are becoming less frequent as suburbia encroaches but has noted this species "tight-rope walking" along a dividing fence - enchanting behaviour to some. Lance hears Koalas calling at night. Possums are present and a problem and wallabies have been observed in the nearby Geelong service road. Judith told us bird life abounds—Red Wattlebirds, a lot of honeyeaters, rosellas, Mudlarks, Magpies, Eastern Spinebills, and periodically thornbills and pardalotes sweep in. Firetails and Superb Fairy-Wrens have been noted and in the recent dry years also Scrubwrens. Kookaburras are heard further in the forest, Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos are visitors and John Mildren pointed to a Long-billed Corella as it flew through the canopy. Judith has the Tall Greenhood *P. melagramma* growing in pots under the verandah. Blackened trees, just over the back fence, brought to our attention the vulnerability of some of our citizens to bushfire.

At Haddon Common Peter Dalman lit a little log fire in the centre of our circle as we ate lunch. A few observations of note were made viz. a Scarlet Robin sitting on a stick at the edge of a pond, Nodding Greenhood and Black-striped or Tall Greenhood in the forest, and the ground was covered in Scented Sundew. Also observed was a white punk fungus six metres up a stringybark.

In the afternoon we went to the Haddon home of Peter and Jill Bothe where we were joined by Ken and Del McDonnell. The home is nestled on the side of a rolling grassy hill amid impeccably manicured surroundings. Peter and Jill made their home on a 20 acre lot eighteen years ago and the neat tidy grounds there today is a credit to them. The lot is very sheltered; the north wind gives the most trouble. We could all easily make out Mt. Langi Ghiran on the horizon to the north-west and Mts. Misery and Er-cildoun further to the north. The soil is clay, and Peter and Jill said layers of newspaper and wood chips have been added as mulch.

Grevillea species have been planted widely in their garden. Peter felt that whether grevillea is a bird-attracting species is a debatable point. He also said that the last time he did a decent prune of his grevilleas 80% surprisingly grew back. They also have *G. bedggoodiana* which has been pruned right back. Another grevillea species was *G. nudiflora* with its ground-hugging runners. Croweas were emerging as regrowth after Peter had gone through with a brush-cutter. There were a number of Western Australian species in the garden viz. Kangaroo Paw, *Hypocalymma*, *Leschenaultia* and just over the neighbour's fence was a W.A. flowering gum.

There were no cats, and bird life was prolific, including Superb Fairy-Wrens, thrushes,

New Holland Honeyeaters, and on a paddock adjoining a dam were ibis and ravens. Other notable plants were banksias, and *Sollya erecta* - Peter said that it was the biggest it had grown in 8 years, still a low shrub. John Gregurke commented that it is a weed where it occurs on the Anglesea heathlands. There was *A. baileyana* (Cootamundra Wattle) and *Tetratheca*.

An inspection of the newly installed vineyard, berry patch, orchard and fowl pen rounded off our day at the home of this enterprising couple.

Tony Johns.

September Meeting Points

- The President, Carol Hall opened the meeting and welcomed 40 members and visitors.
- Club Name and Logo Embroidery: Members agreed it is desirable to identify club members for the 2002 campout. Cloth hats with a brim were considered to be the best alternative. Committee to continue investigation.
- Lal Lal Falls Management Plan: Elspeth Swan reported on the meeting held at Lal Lal. The meeting requested community input to the Management Plan and further meetings will be held.
- Ballarat Bushland Book Sub-committee: Photography, writing and proof reading of drafts of site descriptions is continuing.
- Supper Roster: Carol Hall reminded members of the supper roster for the coming months.
- Syllabus 2002: Suggestions for guest speakers and excursions were sought from members.
- Presentation of Club Medal to Bill Murphy: Lyndsay Fink presented the medal and spoke of Bill's contribution to the club over a long period including the office of President, leader of excursions and his excellent photography of plants.
- Welcome to new member Kate Vlcek; we wish her many happy hours of natural history observations.

Show and Tell.

- Lyndsay Fink: Photographs of Correa, Blanket Bay and Meredith.
- Carol Hall: Book about William Smith, one of the fathers of geology "The Map that Changed the World" by Simon Winchester.

Field Reports

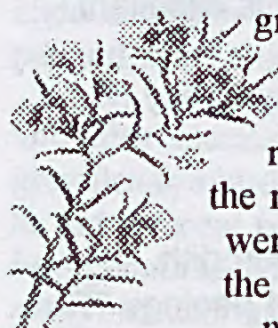
- John Gregurke: At Lake Wendouree, 24 August, several nests of White Ibis with chicks in the willows off Windmill Drive; 31 August Swan nest near Lake Lodge abandoned but cygnets not seen.

- Les Hanrahan: 10 Australasian Shelduck ducklings on dam at Bungaree.
- Ken McDonnell: Pair of Pied Currawongs playing with tennis ball, one bird carried the ball in flight.
- John Mildren: Pair of Wood Ducks displaying interest in hollow in Messmate Stringybark beside Geelong Rd, Mt Helen.
- Phil Morrison: Tawny Frogmouth sitting quite still all day in fork of tree at Ballarat Grammar School.
- Kay Preston: Pair of Brolgas seen from road near Clunes. Brolgas also seen by Dulcie Brooke at Cape York and Claire Dalman at Kakadu.
- Kate Vleck: Black Falcon, Wedge-tailed Eagle and nest at Skipton.
- Bill and Pat Murphy: Red-flowered wattle found in Gippsland has been named *Acacia leprosa*. It is Victoria's Centenary of Federation floral emblem, has been propagated vegetatively and is available in Ballarat nurseries.
- Kay Preston visited the "Botanical Venus" exhibition at the Postmaster Gallery; this extract is from Bulletin 4:

"Daniel Solander [1733-1782] studied natural history at Uppsala University for Carl von Linne. He was then sent to England to spread the word about *Sistema naturae*, Linne's system for classifying plants, animals and minerals. Solander was the first Swede to sail around the world. In three years he collected 30,300 plants from all over the world and 1,400 of them were new to science. In Australia and New Zealand he has long been regarded as the "Father of Pacific Botany". He lives on in geographical names like Solander Islands in New Zealand and Cape Solander by Botany Bay in Australia."

Mid-month Excursion - Dereel Lagoon and Bush Reserve

Twelve members set forth on a warm, calm and sunny day (how pleasant after the greyness of recent outings) and were immediately rewarded with the sight of several White-necked Herons in the paddocks on the way south, and skeins of Straw-necked Ibis circling overhead as we arrived at the swamp. Here four Swamp Harriers were busy quartering the reeds for prey and a possible Little Eagle high above. Pobblebonks were evident in the lagoon amid other frog sounds and as we stood on the bank, White-faced Herons took off. Assorted tadpoles were swimming in the gutter beside the track and Grey Fantails chased one another through the mistletoe-infested wattles; White-eared Honeyeaters called and continued to be heard throughout the day.



Smooth Parrot Pea
(Cronin)

Near the Stone Reserve, Manna Gums and Scent-barks provided food for White-naped Honeyeaters and White-throated Creepers; pardalotes called all day long, while on the ground a veritable garden awaited our investigation. In amongst the widespread

bracken were Waxlip Orchids *Glossodia major*, and Nodding Greenhoods *P. nutans* were abundant. More careful searching produced Mosquito Orchid *Acianthus pusillus*, Blunt Greenhood *P. curta*, Maroon Greenhood *P. pedunculata*, Gnat Orchid *Cyrtostylis reniformis* and a thick mat of the leaves of Slaty Helmet Orchid *Corybas incurvas*—and there were two flowers, almost invisible. Scented Sundew *D. whittakeri*, Tall Sundew *D. peltata* var. *auriculata* and Climbing Sundew *D. planchonii* were found throughout, with an occasional Twining Fringe Lily *Thysanotus patersonii*.



Waxlip
Orchid
(Cronin)

After lunch we meandered through a neighbouring block, finding Pink Fingers *Caladenia carnea*, Tiny Greenhood *P. parviflora* and Black-striped Greenhood *P. melagramma*. Small patches of Common Beard Heath *Leucopogon virgatus* were blooming, then we came upon the bright reds and yellows of Common Flat Pea *Platylobium obtusangulum* and Smooth Parrot Pea *Dillwynia glaberrima*. Those of us who knew what to look for found Mayfly Orchids *Acianthus caudata* and the Dwarf Greenhood *P. nana*. With a sense of triumph Elaine Gregurke found the only large spider orchid for the day, Brown Clubbed Spider Orchid *C. phaeoclavia*.

A return visit to an area off Bliss Rd. seen last year with Adrian Morton was disappointing; it was much drier, more overgrown with bracken and no Striped Greenhoods in sight—at least not where we had seen them last time. Still, we were pleased to see the bright red splashes of Running Postman *Kennedia prostrata* which capped a very satisfying day.

Editor.

Volcanoes and Mineral Springs of Central Victoria

VFNCA Campout at Campaspe Downs
near Tylden

March 8—11, 2002 Hosted by FNCV

Details now available.
Bookings due by November 19 2001

Calendar

October

- Fri. 5 **Stella Bedggood Memorial Lecture 8pm:** Prof. Ian Plimer
The History of the World in 45 Minutes.
- Sat. 6 Paddy's Ranges camp-out, Maryborough. (VNPA)
- Sun. 7 Excursion to Skipton with David Hay.
- Mon. 15 Mid-month Excursion: Lal Lal Historic Reserve.
- Sun. 21 Wildflower Walk—Friends of Mt. Beckworth—1.30pm. at The Dam.
- Tues. 23 Committee Meeting @ Carol Hall's 7.30pm
- Mon. 29 Booklet Meeting @ John Gregurke's 3pm.

November

- Fri. 2 Meeting: Richard Naisbitt: *Raptors*
- Sun. 4 Excursion: Inverleigh Flora and Fauna Reserve

Supper Duty for

October: Committee and helpers
November: Kenneth and Joan Riddell

Committee

President Mrs. Carol Hall
Vice-President Mr. Greg Binns
Secretary Mr. John Gregurke
Treasurer Mr. Bob Curtain

Miss Helen Burgess.....
Miss Maureen Christie.....
Mrs. Claire Dalman.....
Mr. Lyndsay Fink.....

Mrs. Carol Hall (Editor).....
Mr. Les Hanrahan.....
Mr. John Mildren.....
Ms. Gail Whyte.....

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Meetings are held at the Ballarat Horticulture Centre, cnr. Gregory & Gillies Sts (VicRoads 254 F8) on the first Friday of the month at 7.30pm.

Excursions: Depart from Creswick Plaza, Creswick Rd., Ballarat (VicRoads 255 M10) at 9.30am unless otherwise specified.

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